

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND WORLD UNITY: THE EVOLUTION OF A GLOBAL CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM DRIVEN BY PRODUCTIVITY

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INTRODUCTION

Divergences in globalization are often attributed to conflicts of interest or ideology, yet their profound origins lie in the hierarchical and differential nature of cultural systems. Culture is essentially a nested set system: with individual culture as the atomic unit, it aggregates through kinship, geography, and institutions into familial, regional, national, and global cultures, adhering to the Law of Commonality Attenuation (i.e., the expansion of a cultural system's scope dilutes its shared cultural core and weakens emotional bonds among its members).

This inherent variability in human social organization constitutes a fundamental barrier to world unity. However, it is not immutable. With transformative advances in productivity and technology, a path to unity beyond coercion and upheaval is becoming clear: its objective is not cultural displacement by a dominant model, but the natural evolution—driven by productivity—of a nascent world culture. This process entails the non-coercive selection, integration, and sublimation of global cultural essences. Catalyzed by the information revolution and centered on individual emancipation, it ultimately propels humanity from discrete “regional cultural assemblages” toward a “global cultural community of harmony in diversity.”

I. THE ESSENCE OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES: CAUSE AND EFFECT IN A DYNAMIC HIERARCHICAL SYSTEM

1. CULTURAL HIERARCHY INTERACTION AND A REVISED MODEL OF COMMONALITY ATTENUATION

The Law of Commonality Attenuation describes the overall trend of cultural aggregation, yet significant bidirectional permeation occurs across levels. Shifts in preferences at lower cultural strata (e.g., individual, family), upon reaching a critical threshold (e.g., widespread demand for “equity”), can trigger value adjustments at higher levels (e.g., national) (bottom-up permeation). Conversely, higher-level cultures exert “framing guidance” through institutions and education (e.g., the concept of “green development” influencing family consumption patterns) (top-down permeation).

This interplay reveals the dynamic nature of cultural differences. At a given productivity level, the aggregating capacity and barrier function of higher-level cultures remain strong, maintaining distinctions. However, increased productivity systematically weakens these barriers, creating the precondition for cultural synthesis.

2. THE “VARIABLE CAUSALITY” OF DIFFERENCES AND THE ROLE OF POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Cultural differences are both a “cause” of world division and an “effect” of historical evolution, and are inherently variable. The post-Industrial Revolution period, in which European individuals’ embrace of “scientific rationality” reshaped national cultures and reduced internal disparities through aggregation effects, serves as a prime example.

The role of political boundaries as “amplifiers” of difference is inversely correlated with productivity levels. In low-productivity eras, individual survival depended on the state, which could strengthen differences through “cultural control.” In high-productivity eras, cross-border connections between individuals (e.g., via the internet) intensify, and the state’s capacity to amplify cultural differences is technologically diminished. This implies that the primary obstacle to unity is itself a product of lower productivity levels.

II. THE POSSIBILITY OF WORLD CULTURAL UNITY: A NON-HEGEMONIC PARADIGM OF “FUSION AND SUBLIMATION”

1. “FUSION AND SUBLIMATION OF ESSENCE”: SCREENING MECHANISM AND THE FORMATION OF A VALUE BASE

The screening of “essence” is neither random nor dictated by power, but a global social selection process governed by the meta-rule of “common human needs for survival and development.” Elements that enhance global collaborative efficiency, safeguard fundamental individual rights, and adapt to a symbiotic environment will gain a competitive advantage in evolution.

This process generates a two-tiered value base:

- Foundation Layer: Universal survival values (e.g., right to life, security). This is the minimum consensus for cultural fusion, the “bottom-line rules” of interaction.
- Elevation Layer: Developmental common values (e.g., sustainable development, fairness, justice). This is the “higher-order consensus” gradually consolidated with advancing productivity, defining the aspirational domain of cooperation.

This base ensures that fusion is a guided sublimation, not an unprincipled amalgamation. Its formation inevitably involves conflict and negotiation (political), but the constraints of productivity determine its ultimate convergent direction.

2. “NATURAL EVOLUTION DRIVEN BY PRODUCTIVITY”: THE TRANSMISSION CHAIN AND POWER REDISTRIBUTION

Evolution follows the “productivity-technology-culture” transmission chain:

- Productivity advances give rise to disruptive technologies (e.g., writing → printing press → internet).
- Technology reshapes the methods of cultural dissemination and generation (oral → mass reproduction → real-time interaction).
- Changes in dissemination methods drive cultural forms from “closed hierarchies” to “open networks.”

The core of this chain lies in the redistribution of cultural power. Inclusive technologies at high productivity levels decentralize the power of cultural production and dissemination from a few institutions (state, church) to global individuals. The free association and creation of countless individuals constitute the direct driving force behind the formation of the nascent culture.

III. THE PATH OF EVOLUTION: INDIVIDUAL “BOUNDARY-BREAKING” AND THE “TRANSFORMATION” OF TRADITIONAL CONTAINERS

1. INDIVIDUAL CULTURE'S “GLOBAL SOURCING” AND “ACTIVE RECONSTRUCTION”

As information costs approach zero, individuals transition from passive cultural recipients to active reconstructors. They can not only access global cultural materials but also deconstruct and reassemble them, forming personalized cultural expressions (e.g., using local art to interpret global issues). Individuals thus become micro-level agents of “global-local” cultural fusion.

2. “FUNCTIONAL TRANSFORMATION” RATHER THAN “DEMISE” OF TRADITIONAL CONTAINERS

The “attenuation” of traditional containers like family and state refers specifically to the decline of their “cultural monopoly function.” Their core functions are undergoing transformation:

- **Family:** Transforms from “cultural indoctrinator” to “cultural guide” and “emotional safe base.”
- **State:** Transforms from “cultural controller” to “cultural enabler” (ensuring access to cultural channels, supporting local innovation) and “participant in global collaboration” (formulating fair rules).

3. THE “DECENTRALIZED NETWORK” FORM OF THE NASCENT CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM

The new ecosystem, centered on globalized individuals, presents a decentralized, networked structure:

- **Organizational Form:** Comprises countless spontaneously interlinked “micro-cultural communities” based on interest or value.
- **Operating Principle:** “Consensus-guided, difference-tolerant.” Core values serve as the connecting bond; individual differences are the source of innovative vitality.

IV. RESISTANCE TO FUSION: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON A GAME-THEORETIC PERSPECTIVE

The unification process is essentially a global-scale, repeated non-zero-sum game; resistance stems from this.

1. EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT: FROM “INSTINCTIVE DEFENSE” TO “RATIONAL ADJUSTMENT”

Emotional resistance weakens as individual cultural maturity increases. Those with secure cultural attachment (able to identify with their native culture while remaining open to foreign cultures) find it easier to achieve rational adjustment. Its formation is positively correlated with information openness and critical thinking education.

2. THE GAME OF POWER AND CAPITAL: FROM “UNIPOLAR DOMINATION” TO “PLURALISTIC CHECKS AND BALANCES”

“Soft hegemony” encounters three countervailing forces:

- **Global Multipolarization:** The rise of new centers of cultural influence (e.g., East Asia, Latin America).
- **Technological Inclusivity:** Low-cost creation and dissemination tools (e.g., short-form video platforms) empower disadvantaged cultures.
- Individual Awakening: Enhanced ability to identify and resist “cultural appropriation” and “value imposition.”

Together, these forces push the game toward “pluralistic checks and balances,” making the screening process fairer.

3. IDENTITY POLITICS: FROM “CONSTRUCTED OPPOSITION” TO “INTERSECTING IDENTITIES”

The backlash of identity politics stems from the overemphasis on “single identity labels” (e.g., ethnicity). Productivity development promotes the diversification of individual identity dimensions (occupation, interest, global citizenship), forming “intersecting identities” that weaken the exclusivity of territorial identity, transforming fusion from an “identity threat” to “identity enrichment.”

4. TECHNOLOGICAL DIVIDE: THE “UNEQUAL STARTING POINT” AND ITS CORRECTION

The technological divide is a manifestation of “uneven productivity development” and is the most significant practical obstacle to the fusion process. Its resolution requires global coordination: on one hand, reducing access barriers through technical assistance; on the other, developing inclusive cultural technologies (e.g., real-time translation tools) to ensure fusion is not a privilege of the few, avoiding the formation of a new “cultural stratification.”

V. THE UNDERLYING LOGIC: THE “ADAPTIVE CO-EVOLUTION” OF PRODUCTIVITY AND CULTURE

1. THE ITERATION OF CULTURAL FORMS IS AN INEVITABILITY FOR EFFICIENCY ENHANCEMENT

The evolution of cultural forms is essentially a search for the “highest adaptive efficiency” to the current level of productivity:

- **Closed Culture (Tribe):** Adapted to low productivity, reliant on fixed groups for survival.
- **Semi-Open Culture (Nation-State):** Adapted to medium productivity, reliant on state integration of resources.
- **Fully Open Culture (Global Network):** Adapted to high productivity, reliant on global collaboration for efficiency gains.

Each leap is an efficiency-oriented, inevitable choice.

2. LAW AND INTERVENTION IN “TWO-WAY INTERACTION”

Evolution is a dynamic balance between “natural law” and “subjective intervention”:

- **Constructive Intervention:** Must follow the “productivity-culture” transmission law (e.g., promoting internet infrastructure, cross-cultural education).
- **The Corrective Role of Law:** Any intervention violating this law (e.g., forced assimilation) will fail due to individual resistance and developmental needs.

Simultaneously, the consensus on “collaboration” and “innovation” inherent in the nascent culture will, in turn, feed back into productivity, forming a reinforcing cycle of two-way interaction that constitutes the core driving force of civilizational evolution.

CONCLUSION

The deep-seated barrier to world unity lies in the inherent Law of Commonality Attenuation of the cultural “nested set system” under low productivity levels; whereas the hope for unity resides in the natural evolution of a “nascent world culture” driven by high productivity. It is not a monotonous uniformity imposed by authority, but a decentralized ecosystem framed by a “two-tiered value base” and energized by the creative expressions of global individuals.

The future community of “harmony in diversity” is the inevitable outcome of highly developed productivity, the return of cultural power to the individual, and the coexistence of value consensus and tolerance for difference. Every step of technological progress, every instance of individual awakening, adds to this grand edifice. This is not a utopian fantasy, but a clearly visible future prospect rooted in the underlying logic of civilizational evolution.